

Springfield Health District Community Projects

February 1, 2023

Backbone Organization: Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)

Website: <https://www.sevca.org/>

Springfield's Data Driven Problem Statement:

Stigma is a major barrier to health and wellness for residents in our community. Both actual and perceived stigma prevent many community members, including those with substance use disorder (SUD) and those experiencing mental health challenges, from accessing necessary physical and mental health care, social services, community support, housing, transport, employment, and social opportunities. Stigma is also harming many residents' already strained mental health by negatively impacting their sense of belonging, connection, and hope, leading to feelings of isolation. These experiences and outcomes are particularly acute for our most marginalized and underserved community members.

Springfield's Community Goal/Vision:

Greater Springfield will be a thriving community where all members are valued, respected, healthy, hopeful, and have a sense of belonging and connection. All individuals will know how, where, and be able to access quality, appropriate services whenever needed.

Community Projects

3 additional projects to be announced soon!

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Stigma Reduction Community Partnership Project

This project will build relationships, partnerships, understanding, and inclusivity in the community, thereby reducing stigma related to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and mental health challenges. This will be achieved through a variety of direct interactions, including by holding a series of transformative workshops for people with SUD, people experiencing mental health challenges, and community leaders. In these workshops, participants will learn a variety of skills and tools, and will develop Action Plans to achieve their hopes and dreams and navigate through barriers. Participants will also be partnered together to complete assignments as a team, and recreational events will be held where all will come together. Residents from all towns within the Springfield Health District will be served with no cap on participation.

Mother (B)earth Doula

This project recognizes the dire need for birth support in our region - and in particular, for families affected by SUD and mental health challenges. SUD and mental health challenges take a toll financially on families and many lack basic support due to stigma. This project will expand upon the doula services that Brie - soon to be Mother (B)earth Doula LLC, has already been providing to respond to this need. More specifically, this project will provide four district families with birth doula and postpartum support. Services will be provided at no cost to the clients and will include transportation to and from appointments, child care during appointments or as needed, performance of basic household shopping and house cleaning as needed, and other basic doula care. Client families will additionally be provided with small stipends for supplies to support a healthy birth and postpartum experience, which would otherwise be unaffordable to the household.

The Collaborative, in partnership with Green Peak Alliance, Mt. Ascutney Hospital & Health Center, and Turning Point Recovery Center of Springfield - Changing Cultural Stigma Through Messaging

This project utilizes messaging campaigns as a means of shifting the cultural norms and stigma related to mental health and substance use. Because these types of shifts take time, this project will support the continued messaging and advertising of the already established WeAreWorthwhile (WaW) campaign, which is a stories campaign that spreads the light of hope in recovery. It specifically targets self-stigma, which negatively impacts a person's sense of belonging and connection. The WaW campaign wants all who interact with it to know that there are people that care and that there is a community that they can belong to and share stories with. In instances where co-messaging will be particularly powerful, this project will, to a lesser extent, also support the continued advertising of the already established Stigma-Free Language campaign. This campaign will change social norms by 1) raising awareness that words matter, because people matter; and 2) encouraging those living with SUD or mental health conditions to seek help because they matter. Messaging will be shared via branded materials, on digital radio, in movie theaters, on public transportation, via digital and social media advertising, and through physical, mental, and behavioral healthcare providers.

Greater Falls Community Justice Center (GFCJC) - Reducing Stigma Initiative

Individuals with criminal justice system involvement face many barriers in accessing health services, even when they are eligible, due to past trauma and related trust issues, active substance use, and perceived or real mistreatment by service providers due to cultural stigma related to mental health challenges, SUD, and criminal justice involvement. To reduce that stigma and to improve access to care, GFCJC will run a program with three components: 1) community education through sharing the stories of individuals who have faced stigma when accessing needed services; 2) walking with clients - helping women clients who are under DOC supervision and who are experiencing mental health challenges connect with the services they need by making appointments, sending appointment reminders, providing transportation to appointments, and accompanying them to appointments when requested; and 3) a staff education series led by a community member with lived experience about the barriers she faced in getting adequate care and best practices for helping clients overcome similar barriers.

Pop-Up Adventure Play (PUAP) - Play Free VT

Play Free VT is a new project by Pop-Up Adventure Play, with funding from Greater Springfield Community Health Equity Partnership (CHEP). Throughout Spring 2023, we will be hosting a series of events designed to support playfulness among adults and sharing resources for child professionals at risk of burning out. Our focus is on linking play and community mental health, and we want to connect with other local organizations interested in helping to inform and promote this work. Pop-Up Adventure Play is a not-for-profit based in VT and the UK, working internationally to build community around children's right to play. Our approach is grounded in therapeutic and community playwork, meaning that everything we do is informed by the play process.